

# 600 Attend Centenary Banquet at Guildhall, London

*More than 600 Brothers, wives and guests attended the Centenary Banquet on 7th February 2009.....But the story starts some time earlier.*

In the beginning of 2006 the Directors of the six Provinces in the south east held a preliminary meeting to discuss the holding of a banquet to celebrate the centenary of the Association. Each was tasked to identify a high profile location and to try and obtain probable costs. This was not very easy as most large venues would not look further forward than 18 months. However, after a second meeting, it was decided that we would try and aim for the most prestigious location of Guildhall in the City of London. The Association had held several banquets there before and these had been well attended and



Grand President David Taylor

were memorable events. The most recent was the Millennium Banquet in September 2000 when 553 attended. In August 2006 the first formal meeting was held, when the procedures we would follow were set out. Guildhall staff were contacted and they agreed to pencil our event into the calendar. Although they could not give us a definitive cost, we were later able to obtain a reduced charge thanks to the good service of the Bursary Fund.



Guildhall in all its splendour

The 7th February 2009 became a fixed date in the Association centenary calendar. Catering at Guildhall is tightly controlled with a small number of companies licensed and permitted to provide catering. As we were planning our event so far in advance this meant that, whilst we could not have confirmation of who we could choose until approximately one year before the event, when the list of caterers approved by Guildhall would be published, we were able to provisionally consider three companies, who could expect to receive Guildhall approval.

Slowly but surely a large number of Actions were identified, of which many had to be agreed with others in the Association. Cash flow, costs to be underwritten and agreed, a brochure, ticket and menu to be designed and printed, insurance of the event, mementoes for the main guests, photographer, master of ceremonies, music, selection of menu and wines and dietary requirements and of course publicity and marketing, and much, much more.

One of the prime concerns was to be the price. We were fortunate to be able to call on the immense skills of the conference organiser, Peter Rand, who was able to guide us in trying to work



HE Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor

out the costs and what we might aim for. In addition, four brothers from the Millennium banquet were available, Gerald Soane and Robin Oakley Smith, the main organisers of that event, and David Taylor and Anthony Phillips from the marketing team.

The organising committee agreed with the centenary committee and the grand president, the Association's invited

guest list, including The Lord and Lady Mayor of the City of London, His Eminence Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, The Lord and Lady Camoys, the Papal Nuncio and Bishop John Arnold. We were also informed that the Lord Mayor would not be able to confirm until November 2008 when he was elected and he would also then make his decision as to which events he would attend. Sadly he was unable to attend. We were later able to invite His Excellency Francis Campbell, HM Ambassador to the Holy See, together with the Cardinal's and Papal Nuncio's secretaries, Mgrs Martin Hayes and Vincent Brady respectively.

The short list of caterers were interviewed, all had strengths and weaknesses, costs were considered, also attitudes and who the committee thought could deliver on the day. Seasoned Events were selected and then the negotiations started in earnest, finally culminating in an agreed menu and costs enabling a costing for the event to be produced. The price was set at £97.50 to be inclusive or all-in as



Grand Secretary Jim Quinn

the initial announcement in Catena in June 2008 through to December 2008, on a daily basis envelopes containing completed forms and cheques started arriving at the home of Anthony Phillips, who was the organising group's secretary and marketing/sales coordinator, who created spreadsheets and prepared the table plan. There is little doubt Anthony and his wife Monica burnt the midnight oil, especially in the month of January, and contributed a great deal to the administration of the event and we owe them a huge debt of gratitude.



Lord and Lady Camoys; HE Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor; Grand President David Taylor; The Apostolic Nuncio, the Most Rev Archbishop Faustino Sainz Munoz; Mrs Kathleen Taylor; HE Mr Francis Campbell, HM Ambassador to the Holy See

is the policy of Guildhall. It was also agreed that £1 from every ticket sold would be donated to the Bursary Fund. A marketing programme and timetable was agreed and one additional brother from each of the six provinces involved in the organisation was invited to assist in marketing the event throughout the Association. From

There was a steady stream of bookings with attendees from beyond the six Provinces surrounding London; numbers were well up on our previous event and by the end of December the event was almost a sell out with a final number of 611 due to attend. Congratulations to Province 19, who had a total of 120 brothers and their

ladies attending. Sadly the bad weather in the West Country, and illness, reduced the final number on the night. Overall there were 650 bookings.

The agreed action plans were slowly expanded and bit by bit signed off. With the caterer confirmed, a menu tasting took place including wines and so the menu was agreed. January saw the final pieces start to fall into place. Trumpeters from the Royal School of Music were organised, mementoes, flowers, button holes, table displays, and jobs on the night arranged. Much time was expended on the organisation of table plans, and finalising the many dietary requirements with the caterer etc.

And so on Saturday 7th February 2009, at 5.30pm, 605 brothers, ladies, guests, and our distinguished guests in black ties and posh frocks started to arrive at Guildhall. As expected in this year Brother David, our Grand President, was on hand to welcome all, by name. Thankfully all the snow from earlier in the week had disappeared in central London and although very cold it was dry. As people arrived they were ushered into the Old Library for canapés and a champagne cocktail and soft drinks. Examples of the Bursary Fund's assistance to young people was on display. Then following a trumpet fanfare, all were invited to enter the great room where dinner would be served and where 18 tables were laid for dinner with candle light flickering, setting the atmosphere for a memorable evening in one of London's most prestigious and historic venues. Truly a glittering sight. In recognition of their contributions made to the Association a second fanfare heralded the entry into the Great Room of the past Grand Presidents and their ladies. A final trumpet fanfare heralded the entrance of our Grand President and his wife, our first lady, Kathleen, and the Association's guests.

The Prayer for our Holy Father and graces before and after the meal were led by Bishop John Arnold, our Association's "link" with the bishop's

conference of England and Wales. There followed a four course banquet, fine wines, coffee, liqueurs and home made petit fours, all elegantly and efficiently served.

The evening concluded with four speeches; Grand Secretary Jim Quinn welcoming our top table guests; His Eminence Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor responding on behalf of our guests; Lord Camoys, KCVO, DL, the 7th Baron of Stonor, proposing a toast to our Association and Grand President David Taylor responding on behalf of our Association. (Lord Camoys' speech is reproduced on the following pages).

This was a splendid and glittering evening befitting our centenary year, as acclaimed by all attending. A big thank you for your support.

The organising committee....

Brothers Vernon DeCruz (chair), David Taylor (up to May 2008), Anthony Phillips (secretary/administrator), Sean O'Connell, Anthony Bottone, John Rayer, Martin Klust. Grateful thanks are also acknowledged to Brothers John Clark and Philip Gidman, the Centenary Committee Chairmen, and our provincial marketers, Keith Talbot, John Gorman, Gerry McCormack, Terry Travers, Steve Thornton and Pat O'Brien.

#### Some comments:

*'This is just a brief note to thank you, your committee, and your many helpers and stewards on the night, for an excellent evening last Saturday.*

*The combination of the wonderful and historic venue, good food, good wine, good speeches and good company combined with splendid organization and excellent time keeping made it an evening to remember.'*

*'Many thanks for a wonderful evening. It was very impressive.'*

*'Thank you, how you managed to seat over 600 in their correct places was incredible.'*

Anthony Phillips

# "I wish the Catenian Association every success for at least the next 100 years"

*by Lord Camoys, KCVO, DL, The 7th Baron of Stonor*

Mr Grand President, Your Excellencies,  
Your Eminence, My Lord Bishop, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you Mr President for the honour of inviting my wife and me to this splendid and important celebration of the Catenian Association's centenary. For several years we have been aware of your Association by way of your members' annual visit to our Chapel at Stonor when they bring a relic of St Edmund Campion on their pilgrimage to Tyburn. Before going any further, Mr President, I want to say that I am very impressed by the wonderful camaraderie so evident amongst your members this evening, even during the speeches. It is very contagious.

#### A Significant Institution

Those who were responsible for founding the Association, as well as those who have developed it into such a significant institution, not just as part of the Catholic community, but also as a widespread part of our civic society, deserve great praise as well as sincere gratitude for their foresight, their energy and even resilience. One hundred years ago your institution filled an important gap when, even some 80 years after Catholic Emancipation, Catholics were seldom welcomed into local government or into other organisations, such as Rotary Clubs.

Your objectives:

- To provide a forum where Catholics, professionals and others, come together,
- To socialise,
- To help each other and to further your aim,
- To strengthen family life through Faith and Friendship,

are as important now as they ever have been. Of course your objective, to strengthen family life, is shared with all parts of Christianity, by Judaism and by large parts of Islam.

Much has changed in the last 100 years – sometimes for the better, in particular, Catholics in this country should no longer consider themselves to be on the periphery of society. Catholics are now present in all parts, and at all levels of central and local government, of industry, of the professions, and of civic society generally. All of that is at least as pertinent today as it was in 1908, in the face of the increasing threat to Christianity, from atheism, humanism and secularism. It is ever more evident, even by way of those advertisements on buses. This threat is pervasive in many more ways including a tax regime which most unfortunately penalises married couples.

#### Religion in Society

The role of Religion in Society remains as important as it ever was. Religion is important to the health and sustainability of society because it can serve as a channel whereby one generation passes its value to the next – hence,



Lord Camoys

inter alia, the battle to defend faith schools against attack. Another role of religion is what the Chief Rabbi calls the covenantal aspect which provides a moral framework to encourage building up the common good. Societies are an expression of a covenant, a voluntary mutual agreement between each member, and a commitment from each of them to the good of the whole.

Maintaining and strengthening that covenant is the business of religion. His description of the prospects for society, that has lost touch with its religious beliefs and the social covenant it sustains, is bleak. "Relations break down, marriage grows weak, and families become fragile, communities atrophy. People feel vulnerable and alone. If they turn these feelings outward, the result is often anger turning into violence. If they turn inwards, the result is depression, stress related syndrome, eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse".

All of this was part of the Chief Rabbi's recent address to a Conference of Anglican clergy.

I have quoted this clear message given by the Chief Rabbi because I think it refers to a vital ingredient when society is examined from an exclusive secular perspective. I think the Chief Rabbi's message is relevant to all those who make up the Christian Faith. All of them face the increasing threat mentioned earlier. Further, I believe that we (and that includes the Catenians) can, and should, work together with those who are Jewish and those who are Moslems to put pressure on our Members of Parliament throughout the country to adopt policies that favour families. The recent report on the Good Childhood provides just that - good and strong family life is a fundamental matter, way above party politics.

### Truly Impressive

Mr President, your Grand Secretary has been kind enough to provide me with a very interesting outline of your Grand Council's initial strategic reviews. It is truly impressive in its

width and depth and is a sound basis on which your Council may recommend the way ahead, which inevitably may include adaptation and change.

I have been involved in a lot of change in more than one long established and well known institution. Understandably the first reaction to the possibility of change is fear, fear of the unknown. But when those who are interested understand that change, or adaption to changed circumstances, are designed to enhance an institution's fundamental objectives, members and others are likely to welcome them, even if change also involves giving up what no longer makes sense.

Ladies and gentlemen, I think it is true to say that no important institution, even one that is some two thousand years old, has survived, or will survive, let alone flourish, without adapting to good and sensible change, particularly if it relates to an institution's *modus operandi*.

I mentioned earlier, that a lot has changed in the last hundred years, and I will just mention three potential areas that you may think worthy of serious consideration. In doing so I am aware that I may be entering the proverbial lion's den.

### New Blood

First: your membership's average age is over 60. The Nat West used to proudly advertise, 'our branches are our roots'. Gentlemen, the roots of every branch need nourishing by introducing new and younger blood.

### Women in the Association

Second: my family's history of always remaining Catholic was, I believe, as much the achievement of the women as that of men. Especially the mothers in each generation. Women are usually less flexible on matters of fundamental importance than men, and possibly braver than most men. Surely membership for ladies will add to your strength, as well as your attraction.

### Other Appropriate Bodies

Third: as mentioned earlier, Catholics are now, thank God, rightly treated as normal citizens in this country. Understandably, until even the 1960's, many Catholics set themselves apart from other parts of Christianity. Today Catholics, including your Association should, I believe, team up with other appropriate bodies, particularly in the Anglican Church, to face the common threats mentioned earlier. Divided we may fall. Together with other Christian and in cohesion with Judaism and Islam we will continue to flourish the better.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my forebears remained loyal to their faith through more than 250 years of persecution, deprivation and fear, and they worked hard for over 100 years for Catholic Emancipation. They did that, inter alia, so that once again they might be treated as normal citizens to enjoy, not only freedom, but also public office. By an extraordinary coincidence, tomorrow on Channel Four at 7pm you will see part of that story retold.

Mr President, I have great pleasure in asking your guests to rise to toast the Catenian Association and wish it every success in continuing its objectives for at least the next 100 years.